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Forking Paths? Matthew Paris, Jorge Luis Borges, and Maps of the Labyrinth

By Asa Simon Mittman, California State University, Chico

In “The Garden of Forking Paths,” Argentine magical-realist Jorge Luis Borges writes of Ts’ui Pên, a Chinese scholar who retreats into an unexpected seclusion, during which he plans to write a novel and construct a labyrinth. The novel he produces is a mess of contradictions and confusion, an embarrassment to Pên’s family, but a British Sinologist explains his revelation about the process to the narrator, a descendant of Pên: “Ts’ui Pên must have said once: *I am withdrawing to write a book*. And another time: *I am withdrawing to construct a labyrinth*. Everyone imagined two works; to no one did it occur that the book and the maze were one and the same thing.”¹

The narrator of Borges’ story tells us that Pên’s “novel was incoherent and no one found the labyrinth ... Their publication was senseless. The book is an indeterminate heap of contradictory drafts.”² This study concerns intersections between Borges’ tale and Matthew Paris’s *Chronica majora*, which Suzanne Lewis describes in strikingly similar terms: “There seems to be no unifying design in a history of unconnected events, disrupted by constant lapses,

¹ Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths: Selected Stories & Other Writings*, ed. Donald A. Yates, James E. Irby (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1964), p. 25.

² Borges, *Labyrinths*, pp. 23-24.

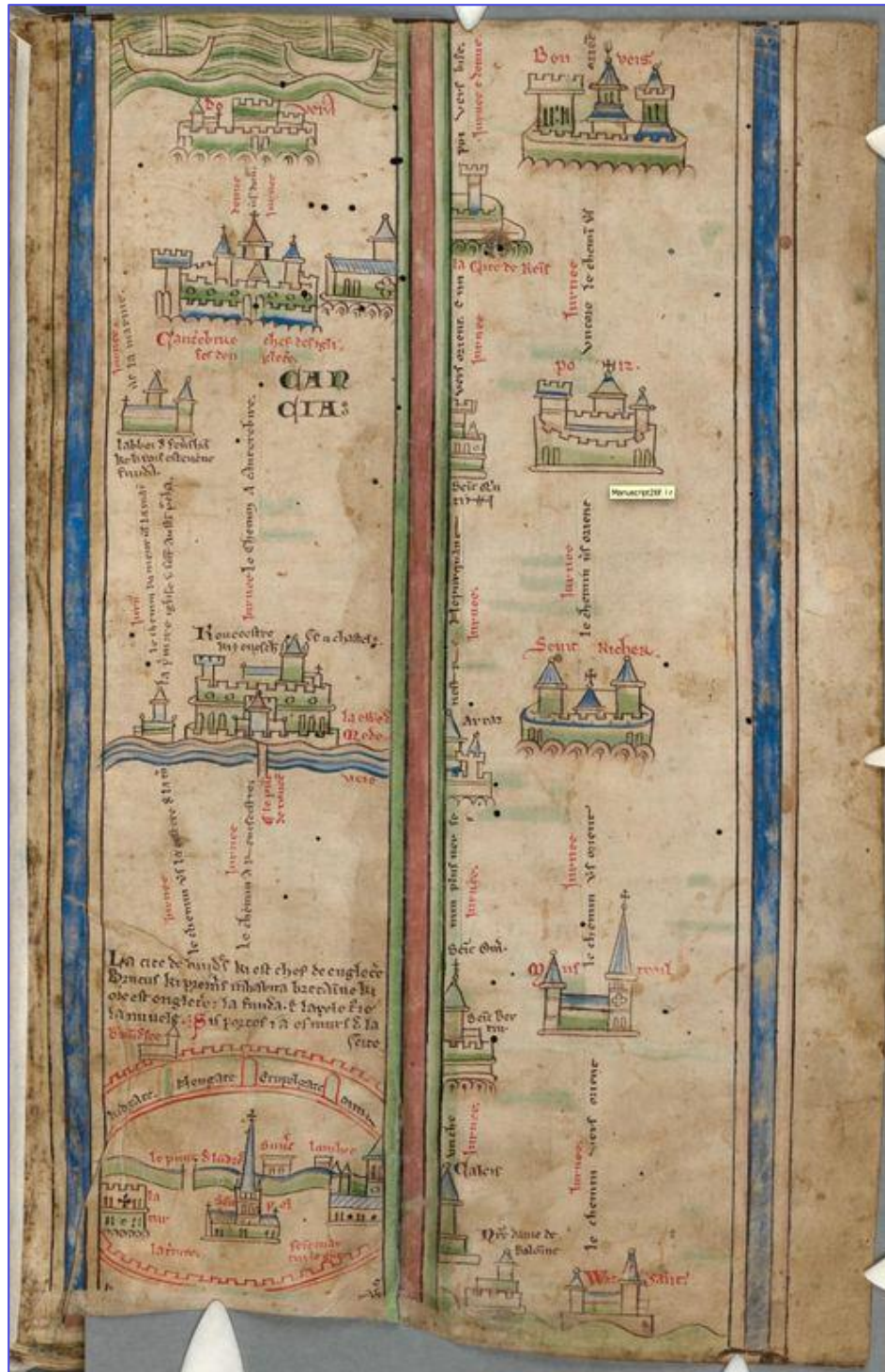


Figure 1 Itinerary Map from London to Bouveis, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College Library, MS 26, f. i r. Photo: by permission of the Master and Fellows of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

backtracking, and confusion, which simply ends at an arbitrary point where the chronicler has laid down his pen.”³ These two texts – the fictional book by Pên and the *Chronica* – are separated by more than a millennium, and by language, genre, and intended audience, among other things. Their comparison might appear wholly arbitrary. They are, though, productively linked by the labyrinthine constructs they contain. In “The Garden,” the apparent labyrinth is a confusing book, not unlike the *Chronica*, a work itself containing an apparent labyrinth consisting of a series of maps filled with “forking paths.” Reading Borges’ story reveals elements of Matthew’s maps that lie beneath their surfaces, and suggests that the maps are more constrained, more rigid and, ultimately, unidirectional than they appear to be.

The *Chronica* is housed in three manuscripts: Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MSS 26 and 16 (hereafter CCCC 26 and CCCC 16); and London, British Library MS Royal 14 C.viii.⁴ CCCC 26 contains the annals from creation to 1188, CCCC 16 from 1189 to 1253, and Royal 14 C.viii from 1254 to 1259, when Matthew died.⁵ I will concentrate on the maps appended to the beginning of the first volume, though similar maps appear at the start of all three volumes, suggesting their great importance to Matthew’s conception of the *Chronica*, his major work. These maps, along with the marginal images throughout the *Chronica*, have been securely

³ Suzanne Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris in the Chronica Majora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p. 51.

⁴ In the most recent monograph on Matthew’s cartography, Daniel Connolly, *The Maps of Matthew Paris: Medieval Journeys through Space, Time and Liturgy* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2009), p. 14, writes that Matthew began the *Chronica majora* “as a fairly strict copy up to about 1235, of Roger Wendover’s *Flores historiarum* (*Flowers of History*). In 1240, or soon after, Matthew started writing, covering the material from 1235 and continuing to the middle of 1258, at which time another hand takes over.” Leonid Chekin, *Northern Eurasia in Medieval Cartography: Inventory, Texts, Translation, and Commentary* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2006), 198-199, dates CCCC 26 to ca. 1240-1250 and later, and CCCC 16 to 1240-1253 and later, both being autograph copies and produced at St. Albans.

⁵ Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, p. 9.

attributed to Matthew himself and “may be regarded in large part as original conceptions and

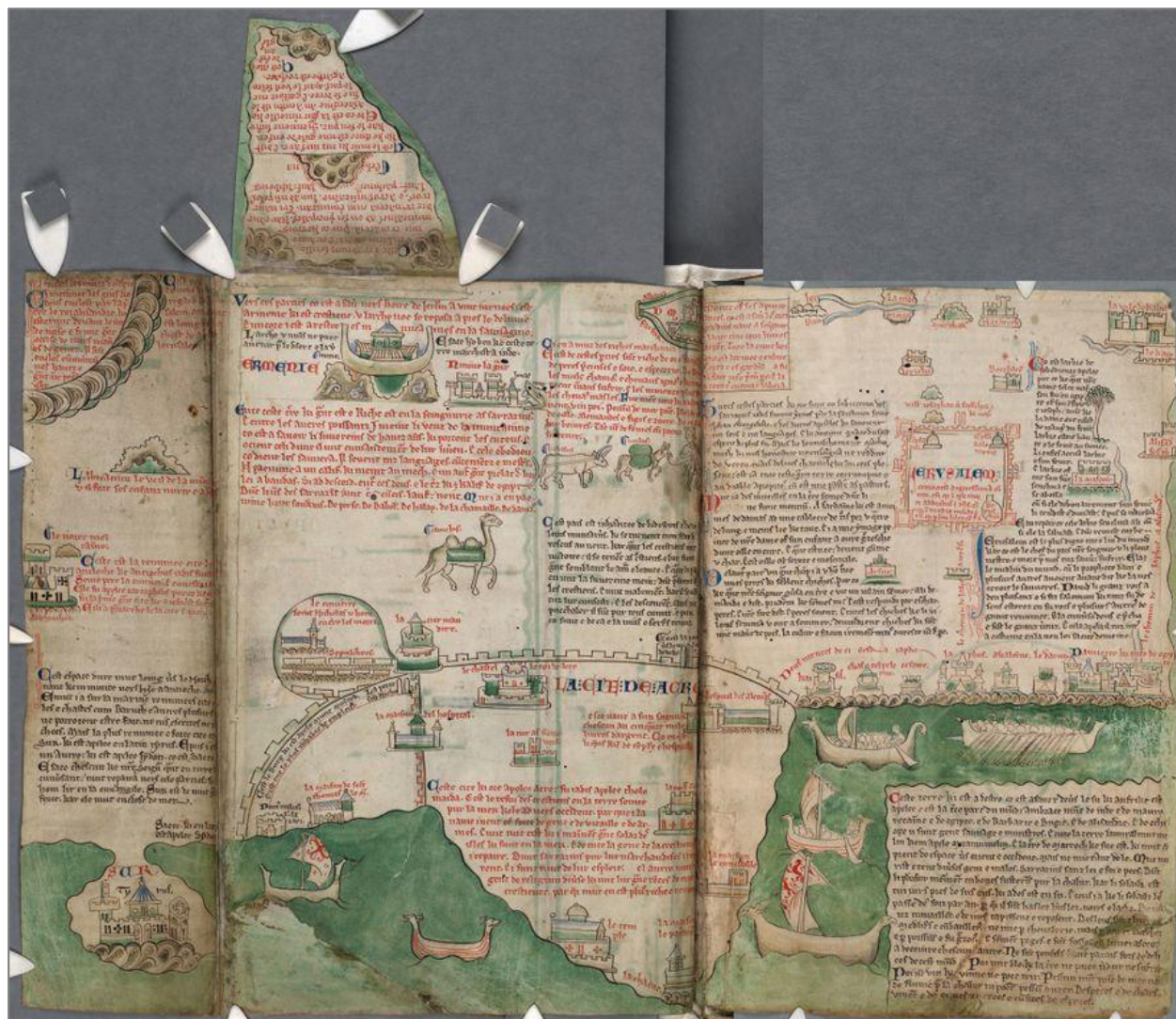


Figure 2 Map of the Holy Land, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College Library, MS 26, f. iii v-iv r. Photo: by permission of the Master and Fellows of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

inventions,” rather than derivatives of traditional models.⁶ The maps, in particular, are startling in their originality and aberrancy. CCCC 26 opens, following the flyleaves reused from a manuscript of canon law, with a series of linked maps running from folio i recto through iv

⁶ Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, pp. 15-33, 322.

recto.⁷ **(Figures 1 and 2)** It is possible – and quite instructive – to page through the full run of the itinerary maps, and the rest of the manuscript, at the *Parker Library on the Web* site.⁸ The first several folios are each divided into two vertical columns. These contain images of cities, connected by clearly marked roads inscribed “*journée*” [a day’s journey]. Each column, then, represents a segment of the voyage from London, at the base of the first column of folio i r, through Sienna, at the top of the final column of the itinerary on f. iii r. **(Figure 1)** Beyond Sienna, the columns end and the space of the maps opens up. **(Figure 2)** There is, though, some transition from the orderly paths at the beginning of the itinerary to the trackless expanses of territory on the final folios. The first columns contain cities connected by clearly marked paths; these are followed by columns with cities still arranged in clearly linear fashion, but without the marked paths. Then, the linearity ends, and we are left with images that are more conventionally “map-like” in their appearance.

Our potential engagement with the maps echoes that of Borges’ narrator, Pên’s descendant, to the actual garden: at first it appears to be a traditional, contained Chinese scholar’s garden, but it transforms conceptually into something “infinite, no longer composed of octagonal kiosks and returning paths, but of rivers and provinces and kingdoms.”⁹ As garden path becomes highway and fishpond becomes sea, so Matthew’s little red lines become roads, inches become miles, vignettes become cities to be traversed by the viewers of his manuscripts. This mode of associating travel’s “micro” with its “macro,” as it were, was of increasing

⁷ The lowercase Roman numerals indicate the status of these folios as prefatory.

⁸ See “Matthew Paris OSB, *Chronica maiora* I,” *Parker Library on the Web* <http://parkerweb.stanford.edu/parker/actions/page_turner.do?ms_no=26> (accessed February 2013). Information on the flyleaves from “Manuscript Description: Matthew Paris OSB, *Chronica maiora* I,” *Parker Library on the Web* <http://parkerweb.stanford.edu/parker/actions/manuscript_description_long_display.do?ms_no=26> (accessed February 2013).

⁹ Borges, *Labyrinths*, p. 23.

significance in the thirteenth century, when pavement labyrinths were either first used in European churches or were newly popular. As Connolly argues:

[T]he labyrinth at Chartres, I submit, was constructed in response to the recent loss of Jerusalem to Muslim forces in 1187. And by presenting its audiences with a richly meaningful image of the city of Jerusalem – one whose centrality in the nave mimicked that city’s centrality in the world and whose fundamental geometry signaled a cosmic architecture – this pavement triggered associations with the city, both in its earthly and historic instance and with its future, heavenly instantiation, and it did so as it invited its audiences to perform an imagined pilgrimage to this sacred center.¹⁰

With the actual city lost to travelers, labyrinths created a space for virtual travel, much in the same way as Pên’s garden, and Matthew’s maps do. Labyrinths allowed church visitors to travel short distances in the densely confined knots of their paths, while simultaneously travelling to the very “center” of the world, emphatically emphasized by their symmetrical forms.¹¹

The maps Matthew’s manuscripts contain, even the “linear” itinerary pages like the one that opens CCCC 26, (**Figure 1**) are not as straightforward as they at first appear. Perhaps unsurprisingly, they are filled with problems, and become “very muddled and confusing,” with cities that are “misplaced” or appear twice.¹² These “errors” might or might not be caught by the viewer. There is, though, a more substantive manner in which the itineraries break down their apparent linearity: like Pên’s labyrinth, they “fork” from the very start, with two paths diverging from London. As Dan Connolly writes, “the main or central route took the monk through the

¹⁰ Daniel K. Connolly, “At the Center of the World: The Labyrinth Pavement of Chartres Cathedral,” in *Art and Architecture of Late Medieval Pilgrimage in Northern Europe and the British Isles*, eds. Sarah Blick and Rita Tekippe (Leiden, Boston: Brill), p. 287.

¹¹ On the centrality of Jerusalem, see, for example, Psalm 73, Ezekiel 5:5, and Jerome, *Commentariorum in Ezechielem* in the *Patrologia Latina* 25, 52, and Iain MacLeod Higgins, “Defining the Earth’s Center in a Medieval ‘Multi-Text’: Jerusalem in the Book of John Mandeville,” *Text and Territory: Geographical Imagination in the European Middle Ages*, eds. Sylvia Tomasch and Sealy Gilles (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 1998); and Asa Simon Mittman, *Maps and Monsters in Medieval England* (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 34-44.

¹² Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, p. 340.

major political and ecclesiastical cities of south England and France ... The peripheral routes ... [show] major religious centers, most often with Benedictine houses.”¹³ Connolly asserts that “by constricting the landscape to such a tight path, Matthew effectively compressed vision toward the upper edge of the codex, the only point of relief to the confined passage,” and yet the forking paths seem, at first, to allow for a less restrained experience than this implies.¹⁴ We *are* able to choose our path to the Holy Land – should we, leaving London, travel via the main route, “*Le Chemin a Rouescestre*” [the Road to Rochester] or the side route, “*le chemin ver la costere et la mer*” [the road toward the coast and the sea]?¹⁵ Once in the Holy Land, we are free to choose any routes we desire, as the roads themselves disappear (up until the very end, as will be discussed below). **(Figure 2)**

These labyrinthine maps of Matthew Paris are quite different from those of his contemporaries in important respects. The well-known Psalter Map, for example, is a typical *mappamundi*, displaying the entire *ecumene*, that is, the inhabitable world, as known to thirteenth-century English cartographers.¹⁶ **(Figure 3)** It is worth mentioning that the Psalter Map is only a few inches tall, and that the whole codex fits comfortably in the hand, unlike

¹³ Connolly, “Imagined Pilgrimage,” p. 608.

¹⁴ Connolly, “Imagined Pilgrimage,” p. 606.

¹⁵ Transcription from Connolly, “Imagined Pilgrimage,” p. 607.

¹⁶ London, British Library, Add. MS 28681, fol. 9r, *ca.* 1265. According to the British Library, “Map Psalter,” *British Library Online Gallery* (March 26, 2009) <<http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/mapsviews/psalter/index.html>> (accessed January 2013): “The Psalter can be dated to 1262 or later: the year in which Richard of Chichester was made a saint. He appears as such in the calendar. Other saints in the calendar (such as the relatively obscure St Erkenwald, a seventh-century bishop of London) indicate that the book was probably made in London, and this is supported by the style of the illumination. It has also been proposed that the map is a miniature version of one that is known to have been painted on the wall of the King’s bed-chamber in the Palace of Westminster.” Chekin, *Northern Eurasia*, p. 140, concurs, listing it as “the early part of the 1260s after 1262, probably Westminster Abbey in London.” See Konrad Miller, *Mappaemundi: Die ältesten Weltkarten* (Stuttgart: J. Roth, 1895–98), vol. 3, pp. 37–43; Peter Barber, “Medieval Maps of the World,” in P.D.A. Harvey, ed., *The Hereford World Map: Medieval World Maps and their Context* (London: The British Library, 2006), pp. 15–19 and Chet Van Duzer, “*Hic sunt dracones*: The Geography and Cartography of Monsters,” *Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous*, Asa Simon Mittman and Peter Dendle, eds., (London: Ashgate, 2012).

Matthew's larger, more cumbersome (and ever-expanding) volume. Still, the Psalter Map



Figure 3 Psalter Map, London, British Library, Add. MS 28681, fol. 9r. Photo: The British Library Board, reproduced under Creative Commons.

remains a strong point of comparison for two reasons: first, it was made within perhaps a dozen years of Matthew's maps. Second, unlike some *mappaemundi*, including Hereford and Ebstorf, the Psalter map was not freestanding. Rather, it was, like Matthew's maps, part of a manuscript. Indeed, before the late-thirteenth-century insertion of additional prefatory miniatures, it was positioned before its text as a sort of frontispiece, as are Matthew's, and was also one of a series of maps.¹⁷ The Psalter Map, like medieval labyrinths, is emphatically centered on Jerusalem – following a new thirteenth-century trend – and around its circumference, we find points of great interest.¹⁸ Beginning at the top and proceeding clockwise, we encounter the Garden of Eden, the Red Sea, a band of monstrous peoples, Britain, and the gates in the Caucas Mountains, retaining the hordes of Gog and Magog. Wonders of this sort are not incidental to the function of medieval maps like the Psalter; rather, they are essential components thereof, supplying a necessary antipode to a central Jerusalem, rooted in biblical and patristic texts.¹⁹ In essence, the center is presented as sacred and the margins as problematic, potent, and potentially monstrous, but also thereby seductive and attractive. While Iain Macleod Higgins is correct that “the viewer of a circular map can never quite lose sight of a well-marked center, since the very shape of the map keeps one's gaze circling around it,” by the same logic, we cannot lose sight of the periphery for long, and the visual attention given to the monstrous peoples of the South, as well as the other peripheral points of interest, keep pulling the gaze back.²⁰ We find similar arrangements of

¹⁷ The Psalter map is one of two that form a sort of series, like Matthew's maps, with one more geographical and one more linear, text replacing itinerary but no less clearly directional and effacing of actual geographic arrangement. See Chekin, *Northern Eurasia*, Fig. X.9.2 for a color reproduction.

¹⁸ Connolly, “At the Center of the World,” p. 302, argues that “the centered display of the Holy City was not a dominant tradition in medieval cartography until the thirteenth century and was occasioned ... by the recent loss of Jerusalem.”

¹⁹ See note 11.

²⁰ Higgins, “Defining the Earth's Center,” p. 51. See also Mittman, *Maps and Monsters*, esp. p. 42.

center and periphery on the Hereford and Ebstorf Maps. On the peripheries of both maps, we see the Garden of Eden, the Red Sea, a plethora of monstrous peoples, and the hordes of Gog and Magog (feasting in bloody cannibalism, on the Ebstorf and also, perhaps, on the Hereford). At the center of each is Jerusalem, marking the *umbilicus mundi*.

Matthew was not immune to the common medieval interest – monastic and secular – in marvels like the monstrous peoples of Africa and Asia, reflected not only by their presence on the Psalter, Hereford and Ebstorf Maps, but also by their near ubiquity in texts and images of all types.²¹ Matthew represented marvels known from monster cycles like the *Marvels of the East* and the *Liber monstrorum*, and from contemporary narratives about cultural others like the “Tartars” – a medieval Christian term for the Mongols – but also from personal observation, such as the elephant given by Louis IX to Henry III, which appears as one of the prefatory images appended to CCCC 16.²² Matthew writes, “[w]e believe that this was the only elephant ever seen in England, or even in the countries this side of the Alps; thus people flocked to see the novel sight.”²³ He also represented distant and feared horrors, like the cannibal rapist “Tartars” who appear in the margins of CCCC 16.²⁴ Ensclosed within St. Albans, Matthew’s position is analogous to that of Ts’ui Pên – each was essentially “*withdrawing to write a book*” that occupied him for many years.²⁵ Matthew managed through his texts, marginal illustrations and

²¹ See Mittman, *Maps and Monsters*, chapter 8, “The Monster Within.”

²² Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, p. 9.

²³ Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, p. 213. For a color image, see “Matthew Paris OSB, *Chronica maiora* II,” *Parker Library on the Web* <http://parkerweb.stanford.edu/parker/actions/page_turner.do?ms_no=16I> (accessed February 2013), f. ii r.

²⁴ For a color image, see “Matthew Paris OSB, *Chronica maiora* II,” *Parker Library on the Web* <http://parkerweb.stanford.edu/parker/actions/page_turner.do?ms_no=16I> (accessed February 2013), f. 167 r.

²⁵ Borges, *Labyrinths*, p. 25.

maps, to bring the whole of the world and its history, from Creation to the present, from sacred Jerusalem to the monstrous elephant, to himself and his monastic brethren.

Just as audiences flocked to see Henry III's elephant, they may also flocked to see some of the world maps, such as the Hereford Map, likely displayed in Hereford Cathedral as part of a pilgrimage route dedicated to Bishop Thomas Cantilupe, who died in 1283.²⁶ As Dan Terkla writes, "Cantilupe's relics made Hereford Cathedral an immensely popular destination for thirteenth and fourteenth-century pilgrims."²⁷ While they presumably came to see and worship before the bishop's tomb, once there, they would have been confronted with the large-format map. In contrast, "[t]he main audience for [Matthew's] maps doubtless was the brethren at St. Albans," though it, too, was likely of interest to St. Albans' many visitors.²⁸ As Connolly writes, "The *Chronica majora*, and the maps that prefaced it, may well have been made available to the kings or other nobles, who could have seen them during their numerous visits to this most important abbey."²⁹ In this way, too, Matthew drew the world to him.

While monsters and marvels played an important role on *mappaemundi* like the Psalter, Hereford and Ebstorf, their role on Matthew's maps is strongly curtailed. They are wholly absent from the itinerary maps, and appear in a limited scope on the Holy Land maps).³⁰ **(Figure 2)**

This may result from the shift from counterpunctual arrangement of sacred center and monstrous

²⁶ Marcia Kupfer, "Reflections in the Ebstorf Map: Cartography, Theology and *dilectio speculations*," *Mapping Medieval Geographies: Geographical Encounters in the Latin West and Beyond, 300-1600*, ed. Keith D. Lilley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming), with citation to Thomas de Wesselow, "Locating the Hereford *Mappamundi*," *Imago Mundi* (forthcoming).

²⁷ Dan Terkla, "The Original Placement of the Hereford *Mappa Mundi*," *Imago Mundi*, vol. 56/2 (2004), p. 135. Terkla provides documentation in the form of lists of miracles attested to have occurred at the tomb.

²⁸ Connolly, *Maps of Matthew Paris*, p. 19.

²⁹ Connolly, *Maps of Matthew Paris*, p. 27.

³⁰ Matthew produced at least three maps of the Holy Land: CCCC 26, f. f. iii v-iv r; CCCC 16, f. iiiiv-ivv; and London, British Library, Royal MS 14.C.vii, f. 4v-5r. For the provenance of 14.C.vii, see Chekin, *Northern Eurasia*, p. 199. I concentrate on the map in CCCC 26, but the other two echo it substantially.

margins on the Psalter, Ebstorf and Hereford maps, among others, to the less clearly structured arrangement of Matthew's maps. Unlike these other maps, Matthew's maps of the Holy Land decenter Jerusalem and, since it is not replaced with anything else, they do not have a clearly defined umbilicus. Since they fill bifolial openings, their centers lie in the folios' gutters. In CCCC 26, the center would be just east of (that is, above) the crenellated wall of Acre.

Jerusalem – so ardently central on the Psalter Map – is shunted off to the right by Matthew. He adds an inscription referring to Jerusalem as “the midpoint of the world,” which seems visually contradicted by his map, whereas such an inscription would have been redundant on the Psalter Map.³¹

What, then, *is* central on the CCCC 26 map of the Holy Land? Roughly centered, on either side of the gutter and just above the wall of Acre, are two large blocks of text. Both are of a somewhat marvelous vein: to the left of the gutter, we read of Bedouins, whose description is reminiscent of wonders texts like the *Marvels of the East*. To the right, more promisingly, we find a passage that begins, in Lewis's translation, “There are many marvels in the Holy Land, of which [only a few] shall be mentioned.”³² However, these marvels are, in comparison to the *Wonders of the East* and other such texts, somewhat anemic. Two are mentioned: the first is an image of the Virgin and Child that oozes medicinal oil that “becomes gummy or like rubber [that] ... is holy and medicinal.”³³ The second is still less impressive – a field of stones shaped

³¹ Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, p. 356.

³² Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, p. 354. For the Old French, see Henri Victor Michelant and Gaston Raynaud, *Itinéraires à Jérusalem: et descriptions de la Terre Sainte rédigés en français aux XIe, XIIe & XIIIe siècles* (Paris: Jules-Guillaume Fick, 1882), p. 131: “Mut i a des merveilles en la terre seinte, dunt li ... [erasure] ne sunt mentium.”

³³ Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, p. 354; Michelant and Raynaud, *Itinéraires*, pp. 131-132: “e i a une ymage peinte de Nostre Dame of sun enfant à ovre grezesche, dunt oille en curt, e quant est vée[e], devient gomme u char: cest oille est seinte e mescinale.”

like chickpeas, remnants of a rather spiteful apocryphal miracle in which Jesus turns a farmer's seeds into stones for having been spoken to disrespectfully.³⁴

This passage contains an odd erasure. These are not, to my observation, a common feature of the maps, and of course I cannot speculate on the date of this erasure. The erasure comes at a curious point, containing what Lewis reconstructs to mean “only a few.” Without the reconstruction, we have a text that instead reads, “There are many marvels in the Holy Land, of which ... are not to be mentioned.”³⁵ In this way, the eraser has furthered the work Matthew began, reducing yet further the map's monstrous or marvelous content. *No marvels*, it seems, should be mentioned. In a sense, this follows the logic of the *mappaemundi* discussed above; we appear to have zoomed in on the center of these maps, to focus on the area around Jerusalem, which would necessitate cropping the world's monstrous fringe. However, if we assume some consistency of geographical space from map to map, Matthew's expansive map, filling the complete manuscript opening and extending out onto added flaps of vellum, *does* reach to the margins of the world. At the upper left corner of the foldout flap along the folio's left edge, as if to ensure the clarity of their separation from the Holy Land, are the peoples of Gog and Magog, visually implied by the wall of the Caspian Mountains, held there until the end of time, when they are to be released to rampage across the face of the earth. The Caspian Mountains, restraining the hordes of Gog and Magog, actually touch the very margins of the world on the Psalter and Ebstorf Maps, and nearly do so on the Hereford Map.

Working inward from the Caspian Mountains toward the center of the map, we find small serpents slithering along the slopes of Mount Ararat, protecting Noah's Ark from the approach of

³⁴ Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, p. 354; Michelant and Raynaud, *Itinéraires*, p. 132.

³⁵ See note 30.

humans: “The Ark,” we read, is “where no one can approach it on account of the desert and



Figure 4 “Generous Men,” and Ethiopians, *Marvels of the East*, London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius B.v., fol. 86r. Photo: The British Library Board.

vermin.”³⁶ This passage strongly recalls one from the *Wonders of the East*: “Because of the abundance of dragons, no person can easily travel in that land.”³⁷ Nearby, we see Jonah being spit up by the sea monster, here a crocodile labeled “*coco*,” on the shores of Nineveh.³⁸ Further toward the center, and less wildly wondrous, we see a camel, centered on f. iii v, labeled with a rubricated inscription, and given a cushion of negative space as if to ensure that he receives due attention. Indeed, these beasts – fairly ordinary to modern eyes – *do* appear just above the two-faced people in the *Beowulf* manuscript’s version of the *Wonders of the East*.³⁹ **(Figure 4)**

Finally, a text to the lower right of f. iv r forms an opposing pole to the Caspian Mountains and describes Ethiopia in terms familiar from marvels texts and purported travelogues: “there are wild people and monsters ... withered, sun-burnt, black and ugly.”⁴⁰ Still, Matthew declined to include an image, like those contained in works like the *Marvels of the East* in London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius B.v.⁴¹ **(Figure 5)**

³⁶ Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, p. 353; Michelant and Raynaud, *Itinéraires*, p. 126: “L’Arche u nuls ne puet avenir pur le desert e la vermine.”

³⁷ Asa Simon Mittman and Susan M. Kim, *Inconceivable Beasts: The Wonders of the East in the Beowulf Manuscript* (Tempe: ACMRS, 2013), p. 64 and 48: “for para dracena micelnesse ne mæg nan man na yþelice on [þæt] land gefaran.” For the Latin *Marvels of the East*, see Andy Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf-Manuscript* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1995), p. 179: “propter multitudinem draconum nemo facile adire potest trans flumen.”

³⁸ Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, p. 362.

³⁹ Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, p. 2, follows David Dumville in giving 997-1016, “Beowulf Come Lately: Some Notes on the Palaeography of the Nowell Codex,” *Archiv* 225 (1988), pp. 49–63, here 63. For more on the dating, see, among other sources Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, p. 72, no. 52; Colin Chase, *The Dating of Beowulf* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981); Kevin Kiernan, *Beowulf and the Beowulf Manuscript*, rev. ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996); Audrey Meaney, “Scyld Scefiging and the Dating of Beowulf – Again,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 7 (1989), pp. 7–40; Michael Lapidge, “The Archetype of Beowulf,” *Anglo-Saxon England* 29 (2000), pp. 5–41.

⁴⁰ Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, pp. 363-364; Michelant and Raynaud, *Itinéraires*, p. 138, “de Ethiopie, ù sunt gent sauvage e munstres ... sunt hasléz, husléz, noirs e laidz.”

⁴¹ Tiberius B.v has been dated by Elzbieta Temple, *A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles: Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts 900–1066* (London: Harvey Miller, 1976), p. 104, no. 87, to the second quarter of the eleventh century. Martin K. Foys, *Virtually Anglo-Saxon: Old Media, New Media, and Early Medieval Studies in the Late Age of Print* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007), p. 113, dates the manuscript to around 1050. It is likely

Matthew also chooses not to dwell in his maps on the horrifying hordes of Gog and Magog, lurking behind the Caspian Mountains, which is surprising, given his millennialism. In contrast, the Ebstorf Map, for example, gives us a gory presentation of these cannibal hordes.⁴² In the *Chronica* and contemporary accounts, Gog and Magog are conflated with the two most prominent cultural Others perceived as threats to thirteenth-century ‘Christendom’: Jews and Mongols. Lewis sums up Matthew’s views, characterizing Gog and Magog as “the apocalyptic Mongol hordes ... unleashed beyond the frontiers of civilization as harbingers of the end of the world.”⁴³ In the *Chronica*, Matthew quotes a letter from Ivo of Narbonne to Bishop Gerald of Bordeaux describing these “Tartars” in grotesque and horrifying terms and accompanies it by a marginal illustration. Matthew writes, “The old and ugly women were given to the cannibals ... as their daily allowance of food; those who were beautiful were not eaten, but were suffocated by mobs of ravishers in spite of all their cries and lamentations,” and worse.⁴⁴ Matthew, who seems to have invented “the most sadistic and offensive passages in Ivo’s letter,” says the Tartars “are

from Christ Church, Canterbury, or Winchester. A copy of this manuscript was made somewhat closer in date to Matthew Paris, though still substantially earlier: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 614. C. M. Kauffman, *A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles: Romanesque Manuscripts, 1066–1190* (London: Harvey Miller, 1975), p. 77, no. 38, dates this to 1120–1140. In his recent dissertation, Alun Ford, “The ‘Wonders of the East’ in its Contexts: A Critical Examination of London, British Library, Cotton Mss Vitellius A.xv and Tiberius B.v, and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms Bodley 614” (Ph.D. diss., University of Manchester, 2009), chap. 3, locates it at the Abbey of St. Martin, Battle, where it could have been copied from the Tiberius manuscript, which was sent there in the 1150s.

⁴² For a color image with transcription and German translation, see Martin Warnke, *Die Ebstorfer Weltkarte* <<http://www.uni-lueneburg.de/hyperimage/EbsKart/start.html>> (accessed February 2013).

⁴³ Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, p. 244.

⁴⁴ Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, p. 286. For a color image, see “Matthew Paris OSB, *Chronica maiora* II,” *Parker Library on the Web* <http://parkerweb.stanford.edu/parker/actions/page_turner.do?ms_no=16I> (accessed February 2013), f. 167 r; Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, vol. IV: A.D. 1240–A.D. 1247, ed. Henry Richards Luard (London: Longman & Co., 1877), p. 273: “*Mulieres autem vetulas et deformes antropofagis, qui vulgo reputantur, in escam quasi pro diarrho dabant; nec formosis vescebantur, sed eas clamantes et ejulantes in multitudine coituum suffocabant. Virgines quoque usque ad exanimationem opprimebant, et tandem abscisis earum papillis, quas magistratibus pro deliciis reservabant, ipsis virgineis corporibus lautius epulabantur.*”

inhuman and of the nature of beasts, rather to be called monsters than men, thirsting after and



Figure 5 “Generous Men,” and Ethiopians, *Marvels of the East*, London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius B.v., fol. 86r. Photo: The British Library Board, reproduced under Creative Commons.

drinking blood, and tearing and devouring the flesh of dogs and human beings.”⁴⁵ On Matthew’s map, though, Gog and Magog become “the Jews ... whom God locked up at the request of King Alexander [and] who will go forth on the eve of the Day of Judgment and will massacre all manner of peoples.”⁴⁶ In a moment of wildest paranoia, Matthew unites these three groups. Upon hearing that the Mongols – feared by Christians to be the apocalyptic hordes – are making progress toward Europe, he imagines that continental Jews “assembled on a general summons in a secret place, where one of their number who seemed to be the wisest and most influential amongst them” instructs them to undertake a complex plot to smuggle arms to the Mongols, so that they can defeat the Christians.⁴⁷ Matthew’s fantasy is not merely xenophobic, but outright eschatological, a vital distinction in the context of the maps of CCCC 26. If the Mongols (or the Jews, or for that matter, the Mongols *and* Jews, or even the *Jewish Mongols*) are the hordes of Gog and Magog, then they have already broken out of the gate prophesied to contain them until the apocalypse. This would suggest that End Days were nigh.

Borges’ Sinologist concludes that Pên’s novel, his labyrinth, his Garden of Forking Paths, teaches us that “time forks perpetually toward innumerable futures.”⁴⁸ It is here that Borges and Matthew sharply diverge, and the contrast is illuminating. Matthew’s maps – from the first legs

⁴⁵ Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, p. 501 n. 108, and 287; Paris, *Chronica Majora*, vol. IV, 76: “*Viri enim sunt inhumani et bestiales, potius monstra dicendi quam homines, sanguinem sitientes et bibentes, carnes caninas et humanas laniantes et devorantes.*”

⁴⁶ Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, p. 349, 507 n. 63; Michelant and Raynaud, *Itinéraires*, p. 125: “*Ci meinne[n]t les gius ke Deus enclost par la prière le roi Alisandre, ki isterunt devant le iur de iuise e frunt grant occise de tutes manères de gentz.*” See also Connolly, “Imagined Pilgrimage,” p. 615. I have an essay currently under review on “Mandeville’s ‘East,’ Colonialism, Certainty, and Art History” that pursues the conflations of Gog and Magog, the Tartars and Jews on Matthew’s maps at greater length.

⁴⁷ J.A. Giles, *Matthew Paris’s English History: From the Year 1235 to 1273* (London: G. Bell, 1889), p. 357, available online through the Hathi Trust Digital Library at <<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/inu.32000000637670>> (accessed August 2012); Paris, *Chronica Majora*, vol. IV, 131-132: “*convenerunt in loco secretissimo ex communi conducto. Quos, qui sapientissimus eorum et potentissimus videbatur.*”

⁴⁸ Borges, *Labyrinths*, p. 28.

of the itinerary, branching out from London along two paths, to the (nearly) pathless tracts of the Holy Land – present a range of spatial options to the ocular traveler moving through them. In contrast, Borges’ Sinologist reads a letter from Pên, cryptically stating “*I leave to the various futures (not to all) my garden of forking paths.*” The Sinologist responds:

Almost instantly, I understood: “the garden of forking paths” was the chaotic novel; the phrase “the various futures (not to all)” suggested to me the forking in time, not in space. A broad rereading of the work confirmed the theory. In all fictional works, each time a man is confronted with several alternatives, he chooses one and eliminates the others; in the fiction of Ts’ui Pên, he chooses – simultaneously – all of them. He creates, in this way, diverse futures, diverse times which themselves also proliferate and fork.⁴⁹

Whereas for Pên there the forks are temporal, for Matthew they are spatial. For Matthew and his contemporaries, there existed only *one* future, and its expected arrival was nearly coincident with his creation of the maps. In his entry for 1250, Matthew famously heralded the impending apocalypse:

Matthew’s Chronicle here ends,
And the Jubilee Year sends
Repose down from the skies;
May repose to him be given,
Here on earth, and in heaven,
When he there shall rise ...
Matthew, here your toils are over,
Stop your pen and labor no more:
Seek not what the future brings;
Another age has other things.⁵⁰

But again, this invites a question: If these maps, which were likely made just after 1250, are millennial, why not populate them with prodigies, with monstrous births heralding doom, with

⁴⁹ Borges, *Labyrinths*, p. 26.

⁵⁰ Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, p. 105; Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, vol. V: A.D. 1248- A.D. 1259, ed. Henry Richards Luard (London: Longman & Co., 1880), pp. 197-198: “*Terminantur hic Mathæi/Cronica ; nam jubilæi/Anni dispensation/Tempus spondet requiei./Detur ergo quies ei,/Hic, et cæli solio. ... Siste tui metas studii, Mathæe, quietas,/Nec ventura petas quæ postera porferet ætas.*”

monsters of the sorts found on the Psalter Map, or with images of the people of Gog and Magog, who appear three times on the Hereford Map, once behind their wall and twice *already outside of it*, released into and upon the world?⁵¹ One response might be that the sorts of monsters found on the Psalter Map and other *mappaemundi* were seen as normal elements of creation, rather than as portents of the apocalypse. Second, and more importantly, the choice to include or exclude such images might have been predicated on chronology. Lewis describes the period in which Matthew was making his maps as follows:

Not only is the Holy Land to be inexorably lost, despite the valiant efforts of these last Crusaders, but the invasion of Europe itself is threatened by the apocalyptic Mongol hordes, believed to be Gog and Magog unleashed beyond the frontiers of civilization as harbingers of the end of the world.⁵²

This is, indeed, the moment of *production* for the maps, but this is not the moment (or moments) depicted on the maps, themselves. Returning to Matthew's off-center image of Jerusalem, we find that the three structures it contains are not as they were at the time of the map's creation. By 1250, the Crusader kingdom had fallen, and the Khorezmians had sacked Jerusalem. Muslims occupied the Holy Sepulcher, as well as the Temple of Solomon – home of the Knights Templar – and the Temple of the Lord by 1250. Indeed, two of the three sites were originally Muslim structures – the Temple of Solomon was a mosque and the Temple of the Lord was the Dome of the Rock – and they had reverted to Muslim control by the time the maps were made. As Lewis notes, Jerusalem is the “only instance on the Palestine map in which Matthew uses Latin for the descriptions and captions of the city and its landmarks, perhaps ... to underline the present reality that the Holy City no longer existed in its former Christian state and now belonged to the

⁵¹ Connolly, *The Maps of Matthew Paris*, p. 15; see Mittman, *Maps and Monsters*, pp. 55-58.

⁵² Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, p. 244.

past.”⁵³ The map, then, does not show Matthew’s present moment. Instead, it presents the period before, but also simultaneously, the period after, the transient, lost glory of the Crusader Kingdom and the immutable glory of the Heavenly Kingdom to come.

Connolly translates *jernee*, the repeated inscription on the paths throughout the itineraries, as “one day,” rather than the customary “day’s journey,” perhaps unintentionally conjuring a sense of longing for travel by a cloistered monk – *one day, one day* – but also for the reclamation of the Holy Land – *one day, one day* – and, of course, ultimately, the return of Jesus, the end of time, the Last Judgment, and the creation of the Heavenly Jerusalem – *one day, one day*. The journey may be long – at least 46 days in Lewis’s reckoning – and the path may not be singular or even, further out on the journey, marked at all, but *one day, one day, one day*, for Matthew and his monastic audience, one day the reader would at last arrive.⁵⁴ Matthew’s itinerary is analogous to Ts’ui Pên’s



Figure 6 Hereford Map, detail of Crete and the Labyrinth. Photo: by permission of the Dean and Chapter of Hereford and the Hereford Mappa Mundi Trust.

⁵³ Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, pp. 355-356.

⁵⁴ Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, p. 342.

Garden of Forking Paths, in that we have the ability to choose our own paths as we move from city to city. However, in practice it has more in common with the labyrinth we find on the Hereford Map (**Figure 6**) and on the pavements of many medieval churches. Chartres is “the one remaining, original cathedral labyrinth pavement from the Gothic era” and was possibly the earliest, *ca.* 1220.⁵⁵ The Middle Ages saw labyrinths not as mazes or prisons like Minos’ prototype.

Instead, they were conceptual spaces, locations for *ruminatio*, even for imagined pilgrimage.⁵⁶ As Connolly writes,

In contrast to the classical myth of the Minotaur, which describes a prison of multiple passages and horrible confusion, these labyrinths, and indeed all the labyrinths inscribed on medieval pavements, church furniture, or in manuscripts, were *unicursal*, that is of a single path.⁵⁷

Dutiful walkers of these labyrinths have no alternate paths by which to physically stray. However, their minds might well wander. If those mental wanderings took them to the right destination, they would realize the function of the labyrinths rather than contradict them. By tracing their routes on foot or on their knees, virtual pilgrims would hope to reap spiritual rewards akin to those gained on pilgrimage, effecting *peregrinatio in stabilitate* – that is,

⁵⁵ Connolly, “At the Center of the World,” pp. 285-286, 288. While most of the recorded labyrinths were in France, southern England did (and does) have turf mazes, though dating them is quite difficult. It is therefore possible – if unlikely – that Matthew was familiar with such labyrinths. Still, the connection I would draw is conceptual, not formal, and no direct influence is implied.

⁵⁶ Connolly, “At the Center of the World,” p. 287, n. 7, argues for the term “imagined pilgrimage” over the more common “spiritual pilgrimage.”

⁵⁷ Connolly, “At the Center of the World,” p. 309.

pilgrimage without moving.⁵⁸ Evelyn Edson and Connolly have rightly connected this notion to medieval maps.⁵⁹ Like medieval labyrinths, Matthew Paris's maps were not mazes *per se*, in that there are not alternate routes leading to dead ends: both contain *singular* paths. Matthew's paths *seem* to fork out from London, but ultimately all converge at one geo-chronological endpoint, at a place that is also a time: the Heavenly Jerusalem, at the center of the physical world and simultaneously the end of human history. Like the labyrinths' single paths, Matthew's many roads can only guide the viewer toward one destination.

Connolly nicely evokes the phenomenological experience of walking a medieval labyrinth:

You first enter the labyrinth, ... moving from West to East, from the cathedral doors towards the altar. Very quickly however, the labyrinth focuses your concentration on the path, else you are likely to stray from it. The path is narrow, and the turns are small and tight, requiring attention and focus. The labyrinth is at first a challenge of some dexterity, and so it also foregrounds your sense of balance and of bodily position relative to it. At the same time, there is a loss of your sense of "place" in the church as orientations are constantly shifting and revolving. Its movements to and fro, back and forth create a regular and somewhat wearying effect that combines with the hypnotic vision of the pavement receding beneath your alternating steps. Awareness of your surrounds diminishes as the labyrinth choreographs your body in space.⁶⁰

The itinerary maps in Matthew's manuscript provide an inverse experience. **(Figure 1)** Their path from town to town has the appearance of being perpetually straight and direct, but in fact would twist and turn. In walking a labyrinth, virtual pilgrims orient themselves to its shifting

⁵⁸ Jean LeClerq, "Monachisme et Pérégrination du IXe au XIIe Siècle," *Studia Monastica* 3 (1961), pp. 33-52, Giles Constable, "Opposition to Pilgrimage in the Middle Ages," *Studia Gratiana* 19 (1976), pp. 125-146, and Connolly, "At the Center of the World," pp. 310-311.

⁵⁹ Evelyn Edson, *Mapping Time and Space: How Medieval Mapmakers Viewed Their World* (London: British Library, 1997), p. 14; Connolly, *The Maps of Matthew Paris*, pp. 40-43; and Connolly, "At the Center of the World," pp. 310-311.

⁶⁰ Connolly, "At the Center of the World," p. 310.

orientation; in traversing the itinerary, the world is bent, reorienting itself constantly to our perspective, making the shift to the trackless conclusion, the map of the Holy Land, all the more powerful.

Connolly characterizes the performative experience of walking a labyrinth as “a prolonged, sometimes frustrating process,” but, after all its disorienting divagations, “[a]t the very end of the labyrinth, a straight line appears to lead you directly to the center, to arrive, metaphorically, at the holy city of Jerusalem.”⁶¹ Returning to Matthew’s map of the Holy Land, **(Figure 2)** we find that there *is* a pathway charted on its largely pathless surface, a road marked out like those of the itinerary pages that precede it. Just beneath Jerusalem, inscribed in red and oriented ninety degrees counter-clockwise to the rest of the map, again following our orientation from our bodies, forward, we read “*le chemin de Iafes à Ierusalem*” [“the road from Jaffa to Jerusalem”].⁶² The road is “marked at its midpoint by an unidentified fortification, perhaps intended to represent the so-called Castellum Emmaus ... the last halting place for the armies of the First Crusade before proceeding to Jerusalem.”⁶³ The final destination of the journey mapped out from London forks many times through space, but the end is clear: the Heavenly Jerusalem. Connolly’s understanding of the ways labyrinths guide pedestrians applies equally well to Matthew’s maps; both direct “a viewer’s appreciation of Jerusalem from its earthly guise towards its future, heavenly instantiation.”⁶⁴

⁶¹ Connolly, “At the Center of the World,” p. 310.

⁶² Michelant and Raynaud, *Itinéraires*, p. 137. Leading up to this is another implied pathway, “*devers journees de ci geska japhé*” (Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, p. 356). There is a second pathway, also rubricated and turned ninety degrees, at the right edge of the map. It reads, “*Le chemin de laphes à Alisandre*.” This seems to be a vestige, a latent echo of the itinerary’s multiple paths.

⁶³ Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, p. 356.

⁶⁴ Connolly, “At the Center of the World,” pp. 298-299.

Borges' reclusive author, Ts'ui Pên, "did not believe in a uniform, absolute time. He believed in an infinite series of times, in a growing, dizzying net of divergent, convergent and parallel times ... which approached one another, forked, broke off," and he thereby "embrace[ed] all possibilities of time."⁶⁵ Visitors to his garden, readers of his novel, experience an overlap of time and space, such that they perceive forking paths in space, but are actually reading an account of multiple simultaneous chronologies. In contrast, Matthew's maps seem to present a maze of pathways, but like the labyrinths, present a unitary destination. Here, as with Pên's garden, we seem to see movements in space as we traverse the paths – initially forking for Matthew, but ultimately as singular on his maps as on the labyrinths. However, since the endpoints on Matthew's maps and at the centers of the labyrinths are the *Heavenly Jerusalem*, the motion is as chronological as it is geographical.

We might more tightly bind together the works discussed here – Pên's garden, Matthew's maps and the *mappaemundi* – by considering the notion of the maze.⁶⁶ The word is etymologically related to "amaze" – "[t]o overwhelm with wonder, to astound or greatly astonish."⁶⁷ The usage history of maze runs directly counter to what I would have assumed. The *first* sense given by the *Oxford English Dictionary* is "[a] state of mental confusion, and related senses. ... Delirium; delusion; disappointment."⁶⁸ This usage can be traced to *ca.* 1300. To get to the more common Present Day English usage – "[a] structure designed as a puzzle, consisting of a complicated network of winding and interconnecting paths or passages, only one of which is

⁶⁵ Borges, *Labyrinths*, p. 28.

⁶⁶ My thanks to Dan Terkla for suggesting this line of inquiry.

⁶⁷ "amaze, v." *OED Online* (December 2012) <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/6066>> (accessed February 26, 2013).

⁶⁸ "maze, n.1," *OED Online* (December 2012) <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/115347>> (accessed February 26, 2013).

the correct route through” – we must wait for the fourth sense.⁶⁹ That is, actual mazes are named for the feelings of disorientation they induce. Moving yet deeper into the definition, we find that “[i]n extended use,” maze can signify “a complex network of paths or streets: a bewildering mass of things (material or immaterial), in which the individual components are difficult to separate or make out.”⁷⁰ Taken piece by piece, these usages echo closely the subjects under consideration here. Matthew’s itinerary maps contain “a complex network of paths or streets.” His *Chronica* and Pên’s novel are “bewildering mass[es] of things (material or immaterial).” So too, though, are his maps of the Holy Land, and the *mappaemundi*. The maps echo and invoke the actual experience of pilgrimage, which – like modern travel – was surely bewildering, disorienting, but also amazing.

In an account of the semiotic powers of “Words, Images and Knots,” Massimo Leone argues that “[i]n verbal texts,” a clear reading sequence “can be easily identified ... in visual texts, on the contrary, it is impossible to define what succession of elements constitutes the axis of the process.” However, he continues, “although in images a temporal succession of elements cannot be found, it is always possible to find a succession of elements without temporality.”⁷¹ In short, images function spatially rather than temporally. This is surely the case, more often than not, but medieval maps are frequently anagogic, pointed a spiritual meaning only to be realized in a heavenly future. That is, while medieval maps are organized spatially, they are in a sense oriented temporally. Yes, they are oriented toward the east, but on several *mappaemundi*, beyond the east, it is Jesus who rises. Hereford, Ebstorf, and the Psalter Map are all oriented not only

⁶⁹ “maze, n.1,” *OED Online*.

⁷⁰ “maze, n.1,” *OED Online*.

⁷¹ Massimo Leone, “Words, Images, and Knots,” in *Reading Images and Seeing Words*, ed. Alan English and Rosalind Silvester (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), p. 84.

toward Earthly Paradise at their eastern extreme, but beyond it to the creator of that paradise. So, too, while these maps are centered on Jerusalem, this umbilical point presses the viewer to consider the future. Matthew's maps challenge these dynamics further. Leone is right in that most images function spatially, not linearly, but the itinerary pages present "[a] line or course of travel; a route," much as a text would.⁷² They prepare and condition the viewer, raising an expectation that the maps will function in a linear fashion, and thereby convey motion in time as well as space. The final segment of the path – "*le chemin de Iafes à Ierusalem*" ["the road from Jaffa to Jerusalem"] – realizes this expectation.⁷³

While Matthew's text might seem, at times, like Pên's novel, to be "incoherent" and "senseless ... an indeterminate heap of contradictory drafts," his maps are complex, ruminative, and ultimately fixed in their orientation, pointing us toward a single End.⁷⁴ The decentered maps of Matthew, unlike the labyrinths or the Psalter Map and its cognates, do not announce their radial orientation toward Jerusalem. Instead, they challenge the viewer to work through them slowly, meditatively, to explore and wander as we do in life. They become all the more powerful, therefore, when their off-center, deemphasized Jerusalem turns out to be the only and inevitable end.

⁷² "itinerary, n." *OED Online* (December 2012) <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/100339>> (accessed February 26, 2013).

⁷³ Michelant and Raynaud, *Itinéraires*, p. 137. Leading up to this is another implied pathway, "*devers journées de ci geska japhé*" (Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris*, p. 356). There is a second pathway, also rubricated and turned ninety degrees, at the right edge of the map. It reads, "*Le chemin de laphes à Alisandre*." This seems to be a vestige, a latent echo of the itinerary's multiple paths.

⁷⁴ Borges, *Labyrinths*, p. 23, 24.